

Module 2: Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns



**Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs**

**Module 2: Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns**

Connecticut State Department of Education  
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs  
School Year 2023-24

December 2023

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**Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules**

1. Introduction to Training
2. Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns
3. Comparison of Meal Patterns for Preschool and Grades K-5
4. Milk Component
5. Meat/Meat Alternates Component
6. Fruits Component and Vegetables Component
7. Grains Component
8. Meal Service for Preschoolers

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

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**Module Topics**

- Meal pattern legislation
- Food-based menu planning
- Meal pattern requirements
- Co-mingled meal service
- USDA's Best Practices
- Resources



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**Preschool Meal Pattern Legislation**

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**Preschool Meal Pattern Legislation**

- Same as meal patterns for children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Effective October 1, 2017
  - Final Rule: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
  - Updated CACFP and preschool meal patterns to be more consistent with Dietary Guidelines for Americans

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516>




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**USDA Regulations for the Preschool Meal Patterns**

- Breakfast: 7 CFR 220.8(o)
- Lunch: 7 CFR 210.10(p)
- Snack: 7 CFR 210.10(o)(3)

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>  
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210>




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### Implementation Guidance

- USDA policy memos
- CSDE operational memoranda



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### USDA Webpage

#### Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Documents & Resources

- USDA policy memos
- Final rules
- Educational materials
- Resources and websites




<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>

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### CSDE Webpage

#### Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Operational-Memoranda-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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### CSDE Webpage

#### Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Laws-and-Regulations-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

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### Overview of Food-based Menu Planning




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### Food-based Menu Planning

- Three requirements for reimbursable meals and snacks
  1. Food components
  2. Minimum portions based on specific age groups
  3. Restrictions or nutrition standards for certain foods

Preschool menus must meet all three



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### Meal Pattern Requirement #1: Food Components

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### Food Components

The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the NSLP and SBP

Meat/meat alternates (MMA)	Vegetables
Grains	Fruits
	Milk

Terms to Know

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### Meal Pattern Requirement #2: Minimum Portions

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### Minimum Preschool Portions

- Planned to meet average calorie and nutrient needs for two different age groups
  - Ages 1-2
  - Ages 3-4
- SFAs may serve more than minimum portion of any component




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### Preschool Age Group Considerations

- Child's age is older or younger than meal pattern age/grade
  - If 5-year-old in preschool, preschool meal patterns apply
  - If 4-year-old is in Kindergarten, appropriate meal pattern for school's grade grouping applies




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### Examples: 4-year-old in Kindergarten

Meal pattern	Allowable grade groups
Breakfast	K-5 K-8 K-12
Lunch	K-5 K-8
Snack	K-12



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### Preschool Age Group Considerations

- During co-mingled meals, SFA may use meal pattern of the older grade group for preschoolers



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### Meal Pattern Requirement #3: Nutrition Restrictions




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### Nutrition Restrictions

Restrict	Prohibit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sugar limits for breakfast cereals and yogurt</li> <li>Juice limit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grain-based desserts</li> <li>Flavored milk</li> <li>Flavored nondairy milk substitutes</li> <li>Deep-fat frying on site</li> </ul>




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### Food-based Meal Patterns

- Food components
- Portions based on specific age groups
- Nutrition restrictions

= reimbursable meals and snacks



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### Preschool Meal Patterns



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### Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern


3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No grain-based desserts</li> <li>Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week</li> <li>Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce</li> <li>≥ 1 WGR serving per day</li> <li>MMA substitute for entire grains component ≤ 3 times per week</li> </ul>
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Examples of MMA Substitutions at Breakfast

- ½ ounce MMA = ½ oz eq grains
  - ½ ounce cheese
  - ¼ large egg
  - ¼ cup yogurt
  - 1 tablespoon peanut butter



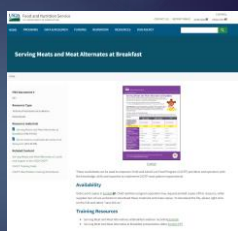
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### USDA Webpage

#### Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast

Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish







<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast-cacfp>

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### Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern

3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No grain-based desserts</li> <li>▪ Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week</li> <li>▪ Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce</li> <li>▪ ≥ 1 WGR serving per day</li> <li>▪ MMA substitute for entire grains component ≤ 3 times per week</li> </ul>
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 			
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern

3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables/Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Juice limit: once per day</li> </ul>
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 			
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern

3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Milk
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Must be unflavored</li> <li>▪ Fat content                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age 1: whole milk</li> <li>• Ages 2-4: low-fat or fat-free milk</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Appropriate fat content when serving ages 1-4 together</li> </ul>
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 			
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for MMA
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ages 3-4 require larger serving than grades K-5</li> <li>▪ Must be main dish or main dish and 1 food item</li> <li>▪ Nuts and seeds ≤ 50%</li> <li>▪ Consider children's developmental readiness</li> </ul>
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No grain-based desserts</li> <li>Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week for all meals/snacks</li> <li>Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce</li> <li>≥ 1 WGR serving per day</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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### Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No vegetable subgroups</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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### Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegetables may substitute for fruits                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 different kinds</li> </ul> </li> </ul> 
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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### Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables and Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Juice limit: once per day</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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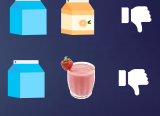




### Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Milk
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be unflavored</li> <li>Fat content                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 1: whole milk</li> <li>Ages 2-4: low-fat or fat-free milk</li> </ul> </li> <li>Appropriate fat content when serving ages 1-4 together</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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### Preschool Snack Meal Pattern

Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Only 1 component may be a creditable beverage
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Snack Meal Pattern






Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities	
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup

- Same servings for each age group

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### Preschool Snack Meal Pattern

Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No grain-based desserts</li> <li>Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week for all meals/snacks</li> <li>Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce</li> <li>≥ 1 WGR serving per day</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Snack Meal Pattern

Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables and Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best Practice: ≥ 1 component is vegetable or fruit</li> <li>Juice limit: once per day</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Preschool Snack Meal Pattern


Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Milk
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be unflavored</li> <li>Fat content                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 1: whole milk</li> <li>Ages 2-4: low-fat or fat-free milk</li> </ul> </li> <li>Appropriate fat content when serving ages 1-4 together</li> </ul>
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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### Additional Requirement for Snack Menus in Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Public Schools

- Applies to HFC schools only
- ASP snacks must comply with Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS)



[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/Data/HFC\\_schools.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/Data/HFC_schools.pdf)

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### CSDE Webpage

#### Connecticut Nutrition Standards



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Connecticut-Nutrition-Standards>

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### Serving Preschoolers with Older Grades (Co-Mingling)

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### Co-Mingling

The practice of serving meals to variety of grades in the same service area at the same time


**Terms to Know**

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### Three Conditions for Using Meal Pattern of Older Grades for Co-Mingled Meals

1	2	3
Served together in same place at same time	Hard to tell preschoolers from older students	Operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during combined meal service




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### Examples of Co-Mingled Meals

Meal	Combined grade groups	Meal pattern
Lunch or breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preschoolers</li> <li>Grades K-5</li> </ul>	Grades K-5
Lunch or breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preschoolers</li> <li>Grades K-8</li> </ul>	Grades K-8
ASP Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preschoolers</li> <li>Grades K-12</li> </ul>	Grades K-12




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### USDA Encourages Grade-appropriate Meals

- Different nutritional needs
- Use specific grade-appropriate meal pattern whenever possible



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### How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- All requirements of meal pattern for older grades apply to preschoolers
  - Minimum daily and weekly portions
  - Weekly requirements




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### How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- Weekly requirements include
  - Dietary specifications
  - ≥ 80% WGR grains
  - Juice limits
  - Vegetable subgroups at lunch



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### How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- Must offer milk variety
  - Flavored milk allowed



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### How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- If implement offer versus serve (OVS) for older grades at breakfast and lunch, OVS also applies to preschoolers

**Not allowed for preschoolers without co-mingling**

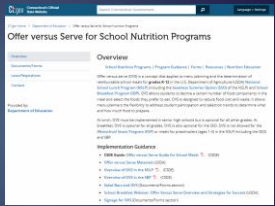


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### CSDE Webpage

#### Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs



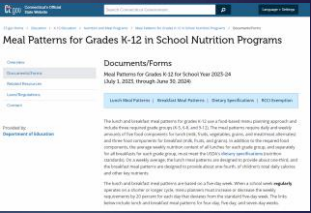
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Offer-versus-Serve-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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### CSDE Webpage

#### Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

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### More Meal Pattern Information




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 Division of School Nutrition Programs

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### Reasons to Avoid Co-mingled Meals

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### Reasons to Avoid Co-mingled Meals

- Closer supervision of younger children
- Family-style meal service is best option
- May affect amount preschoolers eat
- Preschool meal patterns provide amounts and types of foods for best nutrition




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### How to Avoid Co-mingled Meals

- Offer breakfast and lunch in classroom
- Stagger meal service times
- Serve meals family style




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### Knowledge Check: Co-mingled Meal Service

- Decide if each type of meal service is co-mingled



[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Training/Preschool/Preschool\\_Meal\\_Pattern\\_Worksheet\\_Module\\_2\\_Comingled\\_Meals.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Training/Preschool/Preschool_Meal_Pattern_Worksheet_Module_2_Comingled_Meals.pdf)

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### Co-mingled meals?

1. Preschoolers are mixed together with grades K-5 at lunch and both grade groups go through the serving line together

Yes  No

May use K-5 lunch meal pattern for both groups



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### Co-mingled meals?

2. Preschoolers and grades K-8 arrive at school at the same time and enter the cafeteria serving line together to get breakfast

Yes  No

May use K-8 breakfast meal pattern for both groups



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**Co-mingled meals?**

3. Preschoolers and grades K-8 are served ASP snack in the same service area at the same time

Yes  No

May use K-12 snack meal pattern for both groups



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**Co-mingled meals?**

4. Preschoolers and students in grades K-5 eat together during the same meal period but one serving line is used for preschoolers and another serving line is used for grades K-5

Yes  No

Must use preschool meal pattern and K-5 meal pattern



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**Co-mingled meals?**

5. A school with preschoolers and grades K-8 offers a bagged grab-and-go breakfast from one location that is available to students at the beginning of the school day

Yes  No

May use K-8 breakfast meal pattern for both groups



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**Co-mingled meals?**

6. At lunch, the preschool class eats immediately after the older grade groups and food service staff do not have time to switch serving utensils or change food items, such as removing flavored milk

Yes  No

May use older grades' lunch meal pattern for both groups



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**Co-mingled meals?**

7. Preschoolers eat breakfast in the classroom

Yes  No

Must use preschool meal pattern



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**Reminder: When Preschool Meal Patterns Apply**



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### When Preschool Meal Patterns Apply

- Meals/snacks served to preschoolers in different area/time from older grades
  - Separate cafeteria serving line
  - Separate meal service time
  - Classroom meals

Provides best nutrition for preschoolers



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### USDA Best Practices for Preschool Meals




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### USDA Best Practices for Preschool Meals

- Improve nutritional quality of preschool meals and snacks




[https://ms-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cacfp/cacfp\\_factBP.pdf](https://ms-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cacfp/cacfp_factBP.pdf)

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### Best Practices for Vegetables and Fruits

- Serve a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required snack components
- Serve whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice
  - Cut fresh fruits into appropriate size
- Provide at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup each week



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### Best Practices for Grains

- ≥ 2 servings of WGR grains per day




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### Best Practices for MMA

- Serve only lean meats, nuts, and legumes
- Limit processed meats to 1 serving per week
- Choose foods lower in saturated fat



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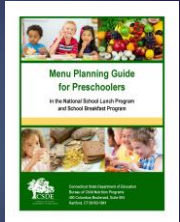
## Meal Pattern Resources

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## CSDE Resource

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program



[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu\\_Planning\\_Guide\\_Preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf)

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## CSDE Webpage

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs



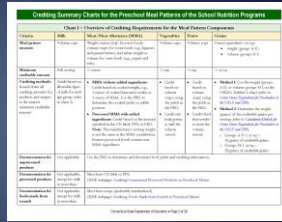
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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## CSDE Resource

Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs



[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Crediting\\_Summary\\_Charts\\_SNP\\_Preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf)

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## USDA Resource

Serving School Meals to Preschoolers

English and Spanish




<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers>

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## USDA Resource

CACFP Meal Pattern Training Slides



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-slides-cacfp>


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**CSDE Resource**

**Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns**



[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources\\_Preschool\\_Meal\\_Patterns.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources_Preschool_Meal_Patterns.pdf)

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**Questions?**

Contact the school nutrition programs staff

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CNstaff/countysign.pdf>

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**Thank you for participating!**

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems; gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion; intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email [louis.todisco@ct.gov](mailto:louis.todisco@ct.gov).

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